

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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NESCO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OCON, TGEN, UNESCO
SUBJECT: UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE 1979 UN
CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. UNESCO'S 104TH EXECUTIVE BOARD SPENT AN ENTIRE DAY
(MAY 12) DISCUSSING THIS ITEM (NO. 5.3.1, DOCUMENT
104 EX/17). ALTHOUGH THE TOPIC WAS "UNESCO'S CONTRI-
BUTION," THE PRESENCE OF SECRETARY GENERAL DA COSTA
THROUGHOUT THE DAY WAS TOO TEMPTING FOR THE BOARD
MEMBERS, WHOSE INTERVENTIONS -- LONG ON PHILOSOPHY AND
SHORT ON PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS -- WERE MOSTLY ON THE
CONFERENCE ITSELF.

2. DA COSTA MADE AN OPENING STATEMENT, NOTING THAT
FOCAL POINTS FOR THE CONFERENCE HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED
IN 120 COUNTRIES AND THAT 25 NATIONAL DOCUMENTS HAVE
BEEN RECEIVED TO DATE. HE PREDICTED THAT UNCSTD WILL
BE A POLITICAL CONFERENCE AND THAT HIS OWN PHILOSOPHY
FAVORS INCREASED DELEGATION OF POWER TO INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS.

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3. TWENTY DELEGATES TOOK THE FLOOR. ZMERLI OF
TUNISIA, SPEAKING FOR AFRICA, OPENED THE DISCUSSION
WITH A MODERATE STATEMENT OF THIRD WORLD MISGIVINGS
ABOUT THE CONFERENCE. HE TOOK BRIEF SNIPES AT THE
"BASIC NEEDS THEORY" AND THE DOMINEERING ROLE OF MULTI-
NATIONAL COMPANIES (HIS STATEMENT BEING POUCHED TO

DEPARTMENT). EXCEPT FOR A BRIEF AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE STATEMENT BY A DEPUTY FOR THE UPPER VOLTA BOARD MEMBER, NO OTHER ARAB OR AFRICAN MEMBER ASKED FOR THE FLOOR.

4. ZMERLI'S REFERENCE TO MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES WAS

GRATEFULLY AND QUICKLY PICKED UP BY A NUMBER OF OTHER PARTICIPANTS, HOWEVER. PROMINENT AMONG THESE WAS ECHEVERRIA OF MEXICO, WHO RIDICULED INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION BASED ON BUSINESS INTERESTS AND REFERRED REPEATEDLY TO THE DAMAGE IMPOSED ON THE WORLD BY THE EXPLOITATION AND REPRESSION OF COLONIAL POWERS. IN WHAT HAS NOW BECOME ONE OF HIS FAVORITE LINES, HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE CONFERENCE WOULD NOT BE A SHOW-AND-TELL OF SO-CALLED ACHIEVEMENTS BY THE "DEGENERATE, INTELLECTUALLY UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES THAT HAVE REACHED A TEMPORARY STATE OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT." MS. ROJAS, A CUBAN DEPUTY, MADE A SHRILL ATTACK ON THE USA AND THE CAPITALISTS AND IMPERIALISTS WHO EXPLOIT OTHER NATIONS. NOBODY PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO HER STATEMENT, HOWEVER.

5. IN MORE SUBDUED TONES, SEVERAL OTHER BOARD MEMBERS ALLUDED TO THEIR CONCERN OVER DOMINANCE OF LDC'S BY DEVELOPED NATIONS OF GREAT TECHNOLOGICAL POWER. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOME PHRASED IT IN TERMS OF TECHNOLOGICAL DEPENDENCY AND THE NEED OF LDC'S TO MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE. SPEAKERS VOICING THESE CONCERNS INCLUDED KRASSOWSKA OF POLAND, DAYAL OF INDIA, GARBO OF NORWAY, AND LIPATTI OF ROMANIA. GARBO ALSO URGED UNESCO TO DEVELOP A "PLAN OF ACTION" THAT COULD BE ADOPTED BY UNCSTD.

6. AMONG THOSE WHOSE COMMENTS WERE BETTER TUNED TO THE SUBJECT AT HAND WERE CARNEIRO OF BRAZIL AND VALERIE OF FRANCE, WHO BOTH ARGUED FOR TRAINING OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL PERSONNEL AS AN ESSENTIAL (AND MISSING) ITEM ON THE AGENDA OF THE CONFERENCE. BOTH KOUTAKOV OF THE USSR AND A DEPUTY OF THE PRC DELEGATION DELIVERED BRIEF AND PERFUNCTORY STATEMENTS, KOUTAKOV SUGGESTING SOME ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR THE AGENDA. SANDVED OF THE USA GAVE A BRIEF AND LOW-KEY

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STATEMENT ALONG THE LINES OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS AND
QUOTING FROM AMB. WILKOWSKI'S STATEMENT TO THE
SECOND PREPARATORY COMMITTEE.

7. PETERSON OF THE FRG, ASILY THE MOST SINCERE
AND, IN SCIATT'S OPINION, THE MOST IMPRESSIVE MEMBER
OF THE BOARD, DELIVERED A SCATHING ATTACK ON UNESCO
FOR HAVING DONE VIRTUALLY NOTHIHNG TOASSIST IN THE
PREPARATIONS FOR UNCSTD. HE REFERRED SARCASTICALLY
TO THE LACK OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE AMONG THE BOARD
MEMBERS, SOME OF WHOM ACCORDING TO THE CONSTITUTION,
SHOULD HAVE BEEN ELECTED ON THE BASIS OF SUCH
EXPERTISE. HE WAS EQUALLY SARCASTIC ABOUT THE BACK-
SEAT ROLE GIVEN TO THE SCIENCE SECTOR BY UNESCO. HE
SUGGESTED THAT, NOW THAT HE HAD DISCOVERED THAT
UNESCO HAD A SCIENCE SECTOR, HE WAS DISAPPOINTED TO
FIND THAT THE ORGANIZATION WAS NOT MAKING CONTRI-
BUTIONS IN SUCH AREAS AS HOUSING, ENDOGENOUS
DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION, SCIENCE POLICY, AND
BASIC RESEARCH. (COMMENT: PETERSON IS
ENTIRELY CORRECT. DESPITE THE REPEATED STATEMENTS BY
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THE DG OF THE VITAL ROLE OF UNESCO IN UNCSTD AND THE
SUPPORT FOR THIS VIEW BY MEMBER STATES, UNESCO HAS

NOT SUCCEEDED IN MARSHALLING ITS RESOURCES AND HAS FAILED SO FAR TO ASSUME AN IMPORTANT ROLE.) PETERSON SUPPORTED THE SUGGESTION BY KOUTAKOV OF THE USSR, WHO HAD BEEN MORE SUBTLE IN HIS CRITICISM, FOR A GROUP OF WISE MEN TO CHART UNESCO'S ROLE IN UNCSTD.

8. THE LAST SPEAKER, BUSTAMANTE OF PANAMA, NORMALLY THE SHRILLEST AND MOST EMOTIONAL MEMBER OF THE BOARD WHEN IT COMES TO CRITICIZING THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, HAD A WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR A CHANGE THAT REFERRED ONLY TO THE NEED FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY DID NOT IMPORT THE WRONG TECHNOLOGY WHICH, IN HIS OPINION, WOULD ONLY SET THEM FURTHER BACK. BY ADVOCATING A FASTER RATE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER, HIS WRITTEN STATEMENT CONTRADICTED THOSE MADE BY SOME OTHERS DURING THE DAY SUGGESTING THAT WESTERN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WAS NOT EVEN WANTED BY THEIR COUNTRIES.

9. COMMENTS: THE REASON FOR REPORTING THIS MEETING IN SOME DETAIL IS NOT THAT IT WAS AN IMPORTANT DISCUSSION, FOR IT WAS NOT, BUT RATHER BECAUSE IT COULD CONCEIVABLY SERVE AS AN ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT MIGHT TRANSPIRE AT THE UNCSTD ITSELF. GRANTED, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF UNESCO AND MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD HAVE AN OPINION OF THEIR OWN ROLE IN SHAPING WORLD HISTORY THAT IS SOMEWHAT DETACHED FROM REALITY. GRANTED, TOO, THAT THERE IS A DEPLORABLE LACK OF SCIENTIFIC EXPERTISE AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD, AND EVEN THOSE WHO HAVE A BACKGROUND IN EDUCATION OR THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, ACT LIKE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEY WERE PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS. BUT, AT LEAST TO A DEGREE, ONE MUST ASSUME THAT THEIR STATEMENTS REFLECT THE MOOD IN THEIR HOME COUNTRIES. AN, IS IT NOT POSSIBLE THAT THESE ARE THE VERY TYPE OF DELEGATES LIKELY TO COME TO THE UNCSTD?

10. GRANTED ALSO THAT MUCH OF IT IS PURE RHETORIC (LIKE ZMERLI OF TUNISIA WHO, IMMEDIATELY UPON CONCLUDING HIS STATEMENT, WALKED OVER TO SCIATT AND HANDED HIM A COPY OF THE SPEECH WITH APOLOGIES FOR HAVING HAD TO GIVE IT AS THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE ARABS AND AFRICANS). BUT RHETORIC IS NOT LIKELY TO BE ABSENT FROM THE UNCSTD EITHER. ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, MANY MEMBERS VOICED THE HOPE THAT THE CONFERENCE WOULD NOT BECOME AN OCCASION FOR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING NATIONS.

11. NO CONCLUSIONS CAN, OR SHOULD BE, DRAWN FROM THIS SUMMARY. IN FACT, EVEN DA COSTA DECLINED TO COMMENT AT THE DAY'S END, AND ADG KADDOURA LIMITED HIMSELF TO PRAISING THE WISDOM OF THE BOARD. IT IS SIMPLY OFFERED AS FOOD FOR THOUGHT AND AN ILLUSTRATION OF WHAT CAN HAPPEN AT A MINI-CONFERENCE WITH 45 PARTICIPANTS. IT MAY OR MAY NOT BE APPLICABLE ON A LARGER SCALE TO THE UNCSTD ITSELF.
HEATER

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